



USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service Pearl, Mississippi, Area 2 Newsletter



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THE PEARL PREVIEW News of the Central Mississippi Area

Dear Area 2 Conservationists:

Happy New Year! I hope we all enjoyed the time with family and friends. The new year is upon us and we will usher in this new year by providing the agricultural community the technical and financial assistance that they need in existing as well as emerging issues. I pose the following thoughts to each and everyone:

Ready—As a team I want you to ponder on the question, “are we ready?” Ready means that you are prepared mentally and or physically for an experience or action. When we think of being ready, my mind goes to the efforts of our armed services. I have great appreciation of how in the event of an occurrence they respond to the call of duty. This comes from preparation. It is imperative for the core of our staff to adequately prepare new employees on the many tasks that we accomplish within our day to day operations; should we fail to do so we will not be ready for the future of conservation. Therefore, I call on all experienced employees to reach back and pay it forward to all within your individual teams in order to ensure staff readiness for any and all situations to come.

Willing—Are we willing? Absolutely! Willing means that we are prompt to act or respond when needed. Each and every one of us should be willing! In this day we are called upon to accomplish more with less, we need staff that is willing to go above and beyond in order to meet the needs of our constituency. Thanks to those who do so day in and day out. All of us should be willing to carry the load to even the weight distribution. Be aware that we can accomplish more than one can imagine while working as a cohesive unit rather than on our own. The accomplishments we have been able to achieve have only come from **TEAMWORK**, and I urge the team to continue to do so.

Able—Are we able? Definitely! Able is defined as having the sufficient power, skill, or resources to accomplish an object. We as employees at every level have the responsibility to provide the foundation to accomplish this last word. **This requires the investment of development of staff and partnerships.** All should be providing the necessary tools to complete an objective. This requires a certain level of competence; and as courses are announced, I encourage all of us to apply for the various trainings and/or developmental opportunities.

Mississippi NRCS will always be **Ready, Willing, and Able** to conserve the various landscapes of the Great State of Mississippi. Thanks for all **You** do!

Kurt Readus
Area Conservationist

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A Legacy of Conservation
Helping People Help the Land



Innovative Technology Used in QVM Spraying— Clarke County, MS

Story by Judi Craddock, Pictures by Kelvin Jackson

Pictures are worth a thousand words, so they say. If this is the case, then watching the newest technology in action must be worth a whole lot more than that! Anthony Cran, Land Management Forester for Scotch Plywood Company out of Waynesboro, MS, took time from his very busy schedule to demonstrate new technology being used to apply chemical spraying practices for quality vegetative management (QVM). Kelvin Jackson, Supervisory District Conservationist for Clarke, Lauderdale and Kemper Counties, and I rode through approximately 6,000 acres of a Tree Farm near Enterprise in Clarke County that Mr. Cran (pictured on next page) manages for the landowner.



Shown above are the side and rear views of a skidder with a smart, high tech GPS system.

Left: Inside cab of skidder—GPS system tracks application of the chemicals sprayed using an auto-spray boom system with cluster nozzles from which the chemicals are applied. Aerial photos of the property are uploaded into the GPS computer so that nozzles know when to spray and when to shut off automatically so to only spray invasive, undesirable species.



Below: Boom and cluster nozzles from which chemical is applied.





Innovative Technology Used in QVM Spraying—Clarke County, MS

Shown at left, Anthony Cran displays native vegetation that comes as a result of QVM. As a land management forester, he explained the benefits of QVM—spraying chemicals to eliminate or reduce competition of undesirable, invasive species that compete for light, nutrients, and water. QVM can also be used to aid in installation of fire lanes, controlled or prescribed burning, and planting of wildlife food plots. Some undesirable species include Sweetgum, Privet hedge, Yaupon, Chinese Tallow or Popcorn tree. The 21 year-old natural stand he is in was sprayed three years ago which killed the Sweetgum.



Picture of natural pine stand 2 years after QVM and prescribed burning.

He plans to spray again in two or three years and will burn one more time. This particular area was previously used for farming—cattle and soybeans, and a pond with bass and bream.

Another area consisting of 5,000 acres is leased to a hunting club—mostly deer, turkey and wild hogs. That particular area has always been in timber.



Skidder applying chemical.

Some spraying is done with a skidder, and some with a helicopter. Most mid-rotation release spraying should be done in late summer prior to trees going dormant. That way the chemicals are taken into the root system a lot better.

Mr. Cran uses 20 gallons of chemical per acre if applied on the ground (skidder) and 10 gallons of chemical per acre in helicopter, and according to manufacturer's recommendations. He thinks the ground spraying works better but does cost more (\$65/acre versus \$40/acre by helicopter). Some species can't be killed without the use of a surfactant (an agent or detergent that makes the chemical stick to the plant so it can be absorbed). Yaupon, Gallberry and Wax Myrtle fit this category. The surfactant can't be applied with helicopter as it will hurt the pine trees (canopy).

for deer and other wildlife by allowing wildlife food sources to grow. Mr. Cran also uses a lot of QDM (D for deer) along with QVM practices for wildlife management.



Area 2 Specialist's Corner— “Opportunity Lost” by Jason Keenan, NRCS Wildlife Biologist

Across the agricultural community, hunting leases have grown to almost a common occurrence as well as a legal necessity. There are positive reasons for a landowner to enter into a hunting lease, but there are also a few negatives that need to be recognized. Sometimes, charging for hunting might not be the way to go. Before I dwell on a negative reason, let us look at the top two reasons for entering into a hunting lease.

Money talks and money talks even more when you don't have to do anything to get it. This concept has led to more and more landowners who do not hunt their own property to allow others to do so. A simple per acre or per year fee is paid, and an individual has an opportunity they didn't have before; thus, the landowner benefits from having someone on the farm to watch over it and monitor unwanted activities such as trespassing, drug production, poaching, and even arson. A legal lease agreement also allows a landowner to dictate how the hunter uses the property. For example, a landowner can include indemnity clauses and require insurance just in case someone is hurt while hunting on the property.



Casey Orr, Jerry Orr's son and his famous deer from this year.

With all that said, how can pay hunting leases hurt hunting over the long term? The answer is opportunity. Many people do not have the opportunity to hunt land they own. Public land in some cases can be undesirable because of high hunter numbers or the diminished availability of game. The old way of “hunting by a handshake” is long gone. Those who can afford leases will purchase them while those who cannot may give up the sport.

Think of how the average numbers of hunters are declining and why: decreased opportunity.

How can we help this situation? Keep the lease for legal purposes, but still allow those without funding to hunt. I am not saying let anyone and everyone hunt, but perhaps join with a non-profit group to host disabled children and military personnel. Try to give friends and family that do not own their own land an

opportunity at least for one weekend a year. Sign a lease for one week. You won't make any money, but perhaps the hunter may trade some work or help with improvements to the property.

Fee based hunting will help a single landowner, but in the long term may hurt hunters in general. Keep the opportunity available for everyone and be safe when you are in the woods!



Hillary Lowe, daughter of Malcolm and Harriet Lowe.



Finnegan Pessoney, son of Barry Pessoney (Area 3 Wildlife Biologist), holding a pair of doves.



Trace Lane, friend of Murray Fulton, and Cinder (lab).



ACES Employee Mike Lilly Makes Soils Presentation at Hinds Community College Submitted by Lynn Porter

ACES employee and retired State Soil Scientist Mike Lilly (see pictures) along with Dr. Billy Kingery, MSU Plant and Soil Science Department, recently assisted Lynn Porter in Hinds County with a soils presentation at Hinds Community College. Mike and Dr. Kingery will also be assisting with some district employee training on soils this summer. Both of them are to be commended for their dedication to conservation education. One can be an “expert” in their field, but if they can’t convey the information or don’t want to teach the information, their expertise is never passed along. Both Mike and Dr. Kingery are not only experts but also are willing to help out with soils education—a precious commodity in the field of conservation education. We are so glad that Mike has come on as an ACES employee in Area 2 to share his knowledge and fun personality with us again!



WATERSHED HARMONY MUSICAL PUPPET PLAY—Submitted by Regina Parker

The Jasper County SWCD hosted a Watershed Harmony Musical Puppet Play at Bay Springs Elementary Auditorium on December 1, 2010. Bay Springs Elementary and Middle School students, grades 2-5 (245 students in all) attended this unique program which is a musical puppet performance aligning with the Mississippi Curriculum Framework and National Science Standards.

The audience was delighted as Bobby Bass and his River Town friends share their experiences in environmental stewardship through this toe tapping musical. River Town suddenly becomes a hustling and bustling community when a large manufacturing company builds a plant next door to Clear Bottom River. Practically overnight, this progressive town begins building more schools, homes, roads, and stores. (Does this sound familiar to your community?) Citizens are very happy that their town is thriving and there are jobs for nearly everyone. Because things happen so fast in River Town, the citizens don’t consider a plan to protect their natural resources. One day, a terrific rainstorm comes and washes large amounts of soil, litter, and pollutants into the river. Fish and other aquatic life suffer, and Bobby Bass vows to help his river friends. When the River Town citizens discover the polluted runoff, they seek help, and develop a plan to use Best Management Practices (BMPs) to keep pollution out of the river. The “Concerned Citizens” organize a Water Quality Stewardship Action Group. They pitch in and clean up the river, replanting trees and shrubs along the river’s edge. Over time, the river regains its health, and the fish and other aquatic animals return to the river.

Bayou Town Productions is owned and operated by Ron, Cherie and Joey Schadler and has produced family educational entertainment since 1990 for libraries, schools, churches and special events.



Cherie Schadler with Bayou Town Productions, BSES students and Principal Jordan Dexter.

Bolivian Delegation Visits NRCS Tribal Field Office

Submitted by Timothy Oakes

A delegation of five from the South American country of Bolivia recently visited the Department of Natural Resources of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Tribal Field Office. The delegation has been organized by the U.S. Embassy and the Bolivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The group attended various activities throughout Mississippi and concluded with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. The week's program was conducted under the U.S. National Guard's State Partnership Program between Bolivia and Mississippi. Bolivian indigenous community leaders were here to share their experiences in the preservation of culture, tribal governance, conservation practices and economic development. The delegation was very interested in government to government relations and agricultural cost share programs. The local Mississippi Area 2 publication "Conservation, How to Participate" really came in handy. They took several copies back with them. We enjoyed the cultural exchange of conservation knowledge and invite them to come back again.



Left to right: Mr. Mike Reed, MSU Extension; Mr. Jim McAdory, MSU Tribal Extension Agent; Ms. Juana Cadena Quispe, Bolivian Tribal Elder; Narciso Cruz and Ms. Eulalia Huanacuni de Laure (kneeling), Bolivian Tribal Elders; Mr. Fred Willis, Public Affairs, MS Band of Choctaw Indians; Mr. Jose Yelincic (Diplomat ,U.S. Embassy Bolivia); Mr. Ricardo Miranda, Bolivia; Timothy Oakes USDA/NRCS; Ms. Carla Maria Zamorano, Bolivian Women in Agriculture leader; and Dr. Dennis Reginelli, MSU Extension.



Coming Full Circle

Story By Timothy W. Oakes



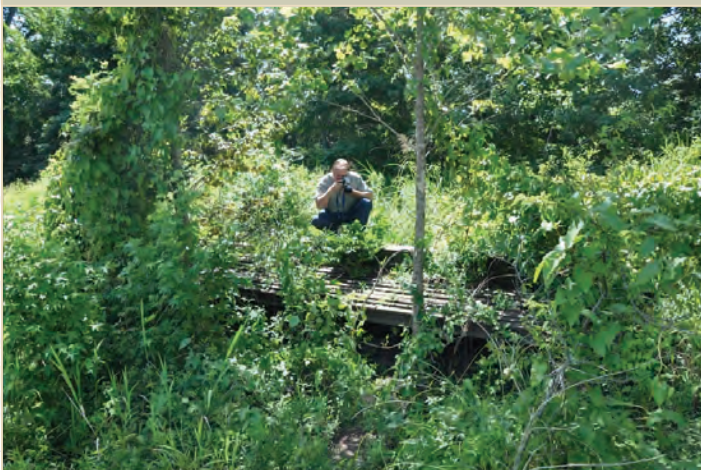
In November of 2001, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians purchased property in Carroll County Mississippi. Not just any property, for it was known as Malmasion. Situated on a hill located 11 miles east of Greenwood, Mississippi, a grand mansion was built in 1852 by Greenwood Leflore (shown in picture at right). The lands were formally part of the Choctaw hunting grounds ceded in the treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. The mansion was destroyed by fire in 1942 with few items saved. Some artifacts are housed in the Malmasion Room at Cottonlandia Museum in Greenwood.

Entrance road to Malmasion. Traveling to the site is still difficult especially during the winter months. The original road (pictured below, narrow with deep side walls, cleaves around deep gullies; and steep hills are about the only way.

There is a railroad still intact along the south side of the property (shown at bottom left) although the trains don't run on them anymore.



Malmasion used to have its own station up until about the 1930's. The old depot site has been located and there are plans to plant wildlife food plots in the fields north and south of its location.



Left: Old Rail Malmasion Depot Site.

Coming Full Circle (Continued)

Watershed Dam (Big Sandy Watershed)

The property today is being used as it was several hundred years ago with hunting and fishing being its primary use. The USDA–NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) is being used to assist the Tribe in its resource needs. In our partnership we have the responsibility to protect the natural and cultural resources of the site. There are many complexities about Malmasion that include the old mansion site, out buildings, the depot site, family church site and cemetery, old roads or trails, and a federal watershed dam. We have to be careful about every environmental aspect—the wildlife, plants, wetlands, forest, and soils, anything that could impact positively or negatively on the site.

With the use of USDA programs like WHIP, landowners have many options to improve wildlife management on the land, and this allows us to stretch a dollar farther. Many of the programs assist in a 50 to 75 percent reimbursement of the cost after the projects are completed.

Hundreds of years ago fire was used as a forest management tool by the first Americans. The Choctaw regarded the use as a necessary part to promote diversity of habitat. Fires were set in order to make abandoned fields useful and prosperous. The fields and forest are again abundant with wildlife. ***The land has come full circle, with the Choctaw once again managing their own land.***

Below: Jason Grisham, Director of MBCI Natural Resources and NRCS Conservation Program Analyst, and Timothy Oakes consult on the scheduled practices needed under WHIP for Malmasion.



Pictured right: Brantley Willis, Field Operations Coordinator for MBCI, looks on while Jim McAdory, MSU Extension Agent; and Jason Grisham, Director of MBCI Natural Resources; examine wildlife corridor.



SAMMY SOIL HELPS OPEN THE NEW MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN'S MUSEUM—A MUSEUM FOR ALL AGES!

By Lynn Porter, Hinds County SWCD District Administrator

The new Mississippi Children's Museum captivates the child in all of us no matter what your age. Sammy Soil was privileged to participate in the grand "unwrapping" of the new Children's Museum on Saturday, December 4, 2010. Sammy was able to be with his other friends—Smokey the Bear, Lionel from PBS's Read Between the Lions, Chick-Fil-A Cows, Captain Catfish, U.S. Fish & Wildlife's Alligator and Blue Crane, all the characters from Wizard of Oz, princesses, Elvis and many other characters (**see picture below**).

Jackson pledged another \$2 million. No doubt, the Junior League of Jackson has been instrumental in the developing, building and opening of the Children's Museum. It literally seemed like hundreds of Junior League volunteers were there for the opening and were more than happy to assist.

The day started off with a parade which included Murrah's Band and dance line, antique cars, characters, sponsors and many more participants. Sammy Soil was so



The children's museum has been in the planning since 1994. In fact, I remember being asked to fill out a survey pertaining to Mississippi natural resources and their role in the museum. In 1997 the Legislature granted the museum \$2 million and then in 2003 the Junior League of

busy that he didn't get to visit the other stations but there were plenty of activities, booths, craft centers, etc. Sammy Soil was on the character walk shaking hands with numerous children and having his picture made.



Left: Top view of museum.

Right: Opening Day at Children's Museum.



Sammy Soil "underground" at the Children's Museum.

To walk into the museum is to walk into a whole new world. It's 40,000 square feet of adventure in learning! The learning is for children and adults. The three areas of integrated learning are literacy, health and heritage. Learning takes place underground, in the "water", the "stomach", the forest, on "Eudora Welty's front porch, among a replica of the Windsor Ruins and other unique education areas. There's a simulated stomach you can walk through (with sounds), an archeological dig, farmer's market, fishing, life size scrabble board, puppet playhouse, reading and music activity rooms, art area, Velcro wall, dress-up room and so much more! Sammy's favorite was Mississippi Underground- where you go "underground" and learned about the soil, geology and plants.

I have been limited on what I can do since breaking my ankle July 9. I owe a big special THANK YOU to my husband, Ed, who agreed to be Sammy Soil for the event. The Mississippi Children's Museum is located adjacent to the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science in the LeFleur's Bluff Park located in Jackson, Mississippi.



Good Things Are Happening With Central MS RC&D! Submitted by Harriet Lowe, Photos Courtesy of Jeannine May



Central MS RC&D has been very busy these days working with the Mississippi Food Network and the USDA Peoples Initiative Gardens. Three partnership gardens were planted with assistance from Jackson State University, the Neighborhood Christian Center and an Eagle Scout to earn his Eagle badge. These gardens were planted in blighted neighborhoods in Jackson. More than 1,000 pounds of produce were gleaned by the public from these gardens.



Central MS RC&D provided mustard and turnip seeds donated by the Wax Seed Company, and vegetable plants donated by a vendor for the gardens. RC&D was able to help with donating plants and seeds for three schools in the Jackson area—Rowan Elementary, Brown Elementary, and Galloway Elementary.



Central MS RC&D partnered with the Hinds Community College Landscape Department and the NRCS State Office Public Affairs Staff on an exhibit during the 2010 fair. More than 150,000 people learned about the importance of rain barrels, recycling, vericomposting, pollinators, and other Backyard Conservation practices. They also worked with MACD and NRCS at a booth promoting sound soil and water conservation at Crystal Springs Experiment Station.

Central MS has started on two new projects in the new year. The Council is assisting in the formation of "Keep The Rez Beautiful." The new affiliate will be working with over 29,000 volunteers concentrating on environmental needs in the Upper Pearl River, a 33,000-acre watershed and the Ross Barnett Reservoir. Keep the Rez Beautiful will be the 30th affiliate in MS and the first in the nation to focus on protecting a reservoir. In addition, the Council will be conducting a research survey on environmental impacts of the Upper Pearl River watershed.



The Council is also in the planning stages of marketing a new "Conservation Grandparents" campaign. With a DEQ grant, the Council will be hosting two Environmental Education Workshops for teachers in Rankin and Simpson Counties. They will also be conducting a Rain Barrel workshop.



Jeffery Fortenberry, New Soil Conservation Technician in Lowndes County

Submitted by Trinda Koehn

Area 2 and Lowndes County welcome new Soil Conservation Technician Jeffery "Jeff" Fortenberry. Jeff was raised on a small farm in Philadelphia, MS, and currently lives in Starkville with his wife Erica and baby girl Evie. After receiving his Associates Degree in Forestry from East Mississippi Community College in 1999, Jeff went to work as a forestry technician at the navel air station in Meridian. From there he moved to the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge as a lead forestry tech/wildlife firefighter. After 2 and a half years of prescribed burning and wild land firefighting in the southeast and western states, Jeff entered into the surveying field as a land survey crew chief with Pritchard Engineering in Starkville. He worked there for five years and a half before starting with NRCS.

Jeff is very excited about getting to know the farmers and landowners in the area and looks forward to helping them in any way he can. Welcome, Jeff, to NRCS!



Larry Bradford Retires

Submitted by Joe Addy

Larry Bradford, Soil Conservation Technician in the Forest Field Office, retired December 30, 2010. Larry began his career with the Soil Conservation Service in March 1988 as a WAE. In April 1991 he was converted to a permanent SCT position, and remained in the Forest FO ever since. Larry also had some



previous federal service before coming to NRCS with Packers and Stockyard.

He worked in between the federal service in the private sector managing livestock and then operating his own poultry and cattle farm. This, along with his degree in animal science afforded him the expertise needed to connect with the producers of Scott County and provide them with experience and technical skills in conservation and management.

Larry not only promoted conservation as an employee, but also demonstrated his beliefs and values managing his own property by implementing numerous conservation practices. He participated in CRP and WHIP with wildlife management and timber management being his primary objectives.

His practices include Riparian Buffer, Shallow Water for Wildlife, Prescribed Burning, Tree Planting, Firelanes, Longleaf Pine Restoration, livestock crossing, and Wildlife Food Plots. His excellent management techniques have transformed the landscape of his property from hay and pastureland to a forested wildlife sanctuary.

Larry is married to his wife Patsy and they have two grown children, Lewis and Sheri.





Jimmie Durr Retires Submitted by Rebecca Freeman

Jimmie Durr, Soil Conservation Technician in the Mendenhall Field Office, is retiring after 32½ years including military time. Jimmie started with NRCS on September 19, 1981, as a conservation aide, then to a soil conservation technician.

He was asked, "What do you like most about your job?" His



reply was, "The opportunity to work with the people in the county by learning and sharing information with people to improve their quality of life. It felt like this job was a calling from God." He explained that when he was in the 9th grade working in the cotton fields with his father, two men visited his father from the "conservation office" and talked to him about his farm. After the men had left, Jimmie told his father, "I want a job like those men." That's exactly what he did! Congratulations, Jimmie! You will be so greatly missed by the office and the farmers!



Left: Standing with colleagues at the Crystal Springs Fall Festival (L to R): Brandon Blakeney, Good Earth Team Volunteer; Jeana Parrett, Copiah County FNP Nutrition Educator; Bill Russell; and Samantha Meese, Copiah County SWCD Clerk.

Bill Russell Featured in MSUCares.com Newsletter

Bill Russell, Supervisory District Conservationist for Copiah and Claiborne Counties, was featured recently in MSU's "MSUCares.com" Newsletter as "one of their Mississippi neighbors." He has collaborated with the Mississippi State Extension Service in 27 counties including Copiah, Claiborne, Rankin, Simpson and Hinds. Together, Bill and Extension team up annually on a high school competition known as Mississippi Envirothon, a Wildlife Jamboree that includes wild game tasting and gun-safety outreach, and an Environmental Day where Copiah County fifth-graders learn about recycling and meet live colts and calves.

"One of the first things I do in any new county is meet Extension personnel," Bill said. "Doing what we do, if you don't have a good relationship with your local agencies, you're behind an 8-ball. NRCS and Extension Service share primary goals. We're about educating and assisting the public and taking care of the environment."

(Excerpts taken from MSUCares.com newsletter, Dec. 8, 2010.)



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